

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A disposable downhole tool or a component thereof comprising an effective amount of biodegradable material such that the tool or the component desirably decomposes when exposed to a well bore environment; ~~wherein the tool comprises a frac plug, a bridge plug, or a packer and~~ wherein the biodegradable material comprises a degradable polymer comprising one or more compounds selected from the group consisting of polysaccharides, chitin, chitosans, poly(ethylene oxides), poly(phenyllactide), and polyphosphazenes.
2. (Canceled)
3. (Currently Amended) The disposable downhole tool or the component thereof of claim 1 wherein the degradable polymer further comprises an aliphatic polyester.
4. (Original) The disposable downhole tool or the component thereof of claim 3 wherein the aliphatic polyester comprises a polylactide.
5. (Original) The disposable downhole tool or the component thereof of claim 4 wherein the polylactide comprises poly(L-lactide), poly(D-lactide), poly(D,L-lactide), or combinations thereof.
6. (Canceled)
7. (Currently Amended) The disposable downhole tool or the component thereof of claim 1 wherein the degradable polymer further comprises polyanhydrides.
8. (Currently Amended) The disposable downhole tool or the component thereof of claim 1 wherein the biodegradable material further comprises one or more compounds selected from the group consisting of poly(adipic anhydride), poly(suberic anhydride), poly(sebacic anhydride), poly(dodecanedioic anhydride), poly(maleic anhydride), and poly(benzoic anhydride).

9. (Previously Presented) The disposable downhole tool or the component thereof of claim 1 further comprising plasticizers.

10. (Original) The disposable downhole tool or the component thereof of claim 9 wherein the plasticizers comprise derivatives of oligomeric lactic acid.

11. (Currently Amended) The disposable downhole tool or the component thereof of claim 1 wherein the biodegradable material further comprises poly(lactic acid).

12. (Canceled)

13. (Previously Presented) The disposable downhole tool or the component thereof of claim 1 further comprising a hydrated organic or inorganic solid compound.

14. (Original) The disposable downhole tool or the component thereof of claim 13 wherein the hydrated organic or inorganic solid compound comprises hydrates of organic acids or organic acid salts.

15. (Original) The disposable downhole tool or the component thereof of claim 13 wherein the hydrated organic or inorganic solid compound comprises one or more compounds selected from the group consisting of: sodium acetate trihydrate, L-tartaric acid disodium salt dihydrate, sodium citrate dihydrate, sodium tetraborate decahydrate, sodium hydrogen phosphate heptahydrate, sodium phosphate dodecahydrate, amylose, starch-based hydrophilic polymers, and cellulose-based hydrophilic polymers.

16. (Currently Amended) The disposable downhole tool or the component thereof of claim 1 wherein the biodegradable material further comprises an aliphatic polyester and sodium acetate trihydrate.

17. (Currently Amended) The disposable downhole tool or the component thereof of claim 1 wherein the biodegradable material further comprises a polyanhydride and sodium acetate trihydrate.

18. (Original) The biodegradable downhole tool or the component thereof of claim 1 wherein the biodegradable material is selected to achieve a desired decomposition rate when the tool is exposed to the well bore environment.

19. (Original) The disposable downhole tool or the component thereof of claim 1 wherein the well bore environment comprises an aqueous fluid.

20. (Original) The disposable downhole tool or the component thereof of claim 1 wherein the tool or the component is self-degradable.

21. (Original) The disposable downhole tool or the component thereof of claim 20 wherein the well bore environment comprises a well bore temperature of at least about 200 degrees Fahrenheit.

22. (Original) The disposable downhole tool or the component thereof of claim 1 wherein the decomposition is due to hydrolysis.

23. (Original) The disposable downhole tool or the component thereof of claim 1 further comprising an enclosure for storing a chemical solution that catalyzes decomposition.

24. (Original) The disposable downhole tool or the component thereof of claim 23 wherein the chemical solution comprises: a caustic fluid, an acidic fluid, an enzymatic fluid, an oxidizer fluid, a metal salt catalyst solution or a combination thereof.

25. (Original) The disposable downhole tool or the component thereof of claim 23 further comprising an activation mechanism for releasing the chemical solution from the enclosure.

26. (Original) The disposable downhole tool or the component thereof of claim 25 wherein the activation mechanism comprises a frangible enclosure body.

27. (Original) The disposable downhole tool or the component thereof of claim 25 wherein the activation mechanism is timer-controlled.
28. (Original) The disposable downhole tool or the component thereof of claim 25 wherein the activation mechanism is mechanically operated.
29. (Original) The disposable downhole tool or the component thereof of claim 25 wherein the activation mechanism is hydraulically operated.
30. (Original) The disposable downhole tool or the component thereof of claim 25 wherein the activation mechanism is electrically operated.
31. (Original) The disposable downhole tool or the component thereof of claim 25 wherein the activation mechanism is operated by a communication means.
32. (Original) The disposable tool or the component thereof of claim 1 wherein the decomposition comprises loss of structural integrity of the tool or the component.
33. (Original) The disposable tool or the component thereof of claim 1 wherein the decomposition comprises loss of functional integrity of the tool or the component.
34. (Original) The disposable tool or the component thereof of claim 1 wherein the tool or the component decomposes within about a predetermined amount of time.
- 35.-37. (Canceled)
38. (Currently Amended) A method for performing a downhole operation wherein a disposable downhole tool is installed within a well bore comprising: desirably decomposing the tool or a component thereof *in situ* via exposure to the well bore environment; wherein the tool comprises a frac plug, a bridge plug, or a packer fabricated from a biodegradable material and wherein the biodegradable material comprises a degradable polymer; catalyzing decomposition of the tool or the component thereof by applying a chemical solution to the tool or the component thereof;

moving a dart within the well bore; and engaging the dart with the tool to release the chemical solution.

39.-40. (Canceled)

41. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 38 further comprising selecting the biodegradable material to achieve a desired decomposition rate of the tool or the component thereof.

42. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 38 further comprising exposing the tool or the component thereof to an aqueous fluid.

43. (Original) The method of claim 42 wherein at least a portion of the aqueous fluid is released from a hydrated organic or inorganic solid compound within the tool when the compound is exposed to the well bore environment.

44. (Original) The method of claim 43 wherein the well bore environment comprises a well bore temperature of at least about 200 degrees Fahrenheit.

45. (Original) The method of claim 42 wherein the tool or the component thereof is exposed to the aqueous fluid before the tool is installed in the well bore.

46. (Original) The method of claim 42 wherein the tool or the component thereof is exposed to the aqueous while the tool is installed within the well bore.

47. (Original) The method of claim 38 wherein the tool or the component thereof decomposes via hydrolysis.

48. (Original) The method of claim 38 wherein the decomposition comprises loss of structural integrity of the tool or the component thereof.

49. (Original) The method of claim 38 wherein the decomposition comprises loss of functional integrity of the tool or the component thereof.

50. (Original) The method of claim 38 wherein the tool or the component thereof decomposes within about a predetermined amount of time.

51. (Canceled)

52. (Currently Amended) The method of ~~claim 51~~claim 38 wherein the chemical solution comprises: a caustic fluid, an acidic fluid, an enzymatic fluid, an oxidizer fluid, a metal salt catalyst solution or a combination thereof.

53. (Currently Amended) The method of ~~claim 51~~claim 38 wherein the chemical solution is applied to the tool or the component thereof before the downhole operation.

54. (Currently Amended) The method of ~~claim 51~~claim 38 wherein the chemical solution is applied to the tool or the component thereof during the downhole operation.

55. (Currently Amended) The method of ~~claim 51~~claim 38 wherein the chemical solution is applied to the tool or the component thereof after the downhole operation.

56. (Currently Amended) The method of ~~claim 51~~claim 38 wherein the chemical solution is applied to the tool or the component thereof via a timer-controlled operation.

57. (Currently Amended) The method of ~~claim 51~~claim 38 wherein the chemical solution is applied to the tool or the component thereof via a mechanical operation.

58. (Currently Amended) The method of ~~claim 51~~claim 38 wherein the chemical solution is applied to the tool or the component thereof via a hydraulic operation.

59. (Currently Amended) The method of ~~claim 51~~claim 38 wherein the chemical solution is applied to the tool or the component thereof via an electrical operation.

60. (Currently Amended) The method of ~~claim 51~~claim 38 wherein the chemical solution is applied to the tool or the component thereof using a communication means.

61. (Currently Amended) The method of ~~claim 54~~claim 38 wherein the chemical solution is applied to the tool or the component thereof by dispensing the chemical solution into the well bore.

62. (Original) The method of claim 61 wherein the dispensing step comprises injecting the chemical solution into the well bore.

63. (Original) The method of claim 61 wherein the dispensing step comprises: lowering a frangible object containing the chemical solution into the well bore; and breaking the frangible object.

64. (Original) The method of claim 61 wherein the dispensing step comprises: lowering a conduit into the well bore; and flowing the chemical solution through the conduit onto the tool.

65. (Canceled)

66. (Currently Amended) The method of ~~claim 65~~claim 38 wherein the dart contains the chemical solution.

67. (Currently Amended) The method of ~~claim 65~~claim 38 wherein the tool or the component thereof contains the chemical solution.

68. (Currently Amended) The method of ~~claim 65~~claim 38 wherein the moving step comprises pumping a fluid into the well bore behind the dart.

69. (Currently Amended) The method of ~~claim 65~~claim 38 wherein the moving step comprises allowing the dart to free fall by gravity.

70. (Canceled)

71. (Currently Amended) A system for applying a chemical solution to a disposable downhole tool or the component thereof that desirably decomposes when exposed to a well bore environment comprising an enclosure for containing the chemical solution; wherein the chemical solution catalyzes decomposition of the tool or the component thereof; wherein the tool comprises a frac

plug, a bridge plug, or a packer fabricated from a biodegradable material and wherein the biodegradable material comprises a degradable polymer, and wherein the enclosure is broken to release the chemical solution, wherein the enclosure is lowered to the tool on a slick line.

72. (Canceled)

73. (Currently Amended) The system of ~~claim 72~~claim 71 wherein the enclosure is disposed on the tool.

74. (Currently Amended) The system of ~~claim 72~~claim 71 further comprising an activation mechanism for releasing the chemical solution from the enclosure.

75. (Original) The system of claim 74 wherein the activation mechanism is a frangible enclosure body.

76. (Original) The system of claim 74 wherein the activation mechanism is timer-controlled.

77. (Original) The system of claim 74 wherein the activation mechanism is mechanically operated.

78. (Original) The system of claim 74 wherein the activation mechanism is hydraulically operated.

79. (Original) The system of claim 74 wherein the activation mechanism is electrically operated.

80. (Original) The system of claim 74 wherein the activation mechanism is operated by a communication means.

81.-82. (Canceled)

83. (Currently Amended) The system of ~~claim 81~~claim 71 wherein the enclosure is dropped into the well bore to engage the tool.

84. (Original) The system of claim 71 further comprising a conduit extending into the well bore to apply the chemical solution onto the tool or the component thereof.

85. (Original) The system of claim 71 wherein the chemical solution comprises: a caustic fluid, an acidic fluid, an enzymatic fluid, an oxidizer fluid, a metal salt catalyst solution or a combination thereof.

86. (Currently Amended) A method of applying a chemical solution to a disposable downhole tool or the component thereof that desirably degrades when exposed to a well bore environment, comprising: lowering an enclosure comprising the chemical solution into the well bore, wherein the enclosure is separate from the disposable downhole tool or the component thereof; and releasing the chemical solution, wherein the chemical solution catalyzes decomposition of the tool or the component thereof; ~~wherein the tool comprises a frac plug, a bridge plug, or a packer fabricated from a biodegradable material and wherein the biodegradable material comprises a degradable polymer.~~

87. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 86 ~~wherein the applying step comprises~~ further comprising releasing the chemical solution from storage integral to the tool.

88. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 86 ~~wherein the applying step comprises~~ further comprising releasing the chemical solution from storage external to the tool.

89. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 86 ~~wherein the applying step comprises~~ further comprising dispensing the chemical solution into the well bore.

90. (Original) The method of claim 86 wherein the degradation comprises loss of structural integrity of the tool or the component thereof.

91. (Original) The method of claim 86 wherein the degradation comprises loss of functional integrity of the tool or the component thereof.

92. (Original) The method of claim 86 wherein the tool or the component thereof degrades within about a predetermined amount of time.

93. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 86 wherein the ~~applying-releasing~~ step comprises a timer-controlled operation, a mechanical operation, a hydraulic operation, an electrical operation, an operation using a communication means, or a combination thereof.

94. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 86 wherein the ~~applying-releasing~~ step comprises breaking a container that stores the chemical solution.

95.-100. (Canceled)

101. (New) The disposable downhole tool or the component thereof of claim 1 wherein the tool comprises a frac plug, a bridge plug, or a packer.

102. (New) The method of claim 86 wherein the tool comprises a frac plug, a bridge plug, or a packer.

103. (New) The method of claim 38 wherein the biodegradable material comprises a degradable polymer comprising one or more compounds selected from the group consisting of polysaccharides, chitin, chitosans, proteins, aliphatic polyesters, poly(lactides), poly(glycolides), poly(ϵ -caprolactones), poly(hydroxybutyrates), poly(anhydrides), aliphatic polycarbonates, poly(orthoesters), poly(amino acids), poly(ethylene oxides), polyphosphazenes, poly(phenyllactide), and poly(lactic acid).

104. (New) The system of claim 71 wherein the disposable downhole tool or the component thereof comprises a degradable polymer comprising one or more compounds selected from the group consisting of polysaccharides, chitin, chitosans, proteins, aliphatic polyesters, poly(lactides), poly(glycolides), poly(ϵ -caprolactones), poly(hydroxybutyrates), poly(anhydrides), aliphatic polycarbonates, poly(orthoesters), poly(amino acids), poly(ethylene oxides), polyphosphazenes, poly(phenyllactide), and poly(lactic acid).

105. (New) The method of claim 86 wherein the disposable downhole tool or the component thereof comprises a degradable polymer comprising one or more compounds selected from the group consisting of polysaccharides, chitin, chitosans, proteins, aliphatic polyesters, poly(lactides), poly(glycolides), poly(ϵ -caprolactones), poly(hydroxybutyrates), poly(anhydrides), aliphatic polycarbonates, poly(orthoesters), poly(amino acids), poly(ethylene oxides), polyphosphazenes, poly(phenyllactide), and poly(lactic acid).

106. (New) The method of claim 86 wherein the enclosure is lowered into the wellbore on a slick line.

107. (New) The disposable downhole tool or the component thereof of claim 1 wherein the decomposition of the biodegradable composition is catalyzed by a chemical solution.

108. (New) The disposable downhole tool or the component thereof of claim 107 wherein the chemical solution is applied to the disposable downhole tool or the component thereof by moving a dart within the well bore and engaging the dart with the tool to release the chemical solution.

109. (New) The disposable downhole tool or the component thereof of claim 107 wherein the chemical solution is applied to the disposable downhole tool or the component thereof by releasing the chemical solution from storage integral to the tool.

110. (New) The disposable downhole tool or the component thereof of claim 107 wherein the chemical solution is applied to the disposable downhole tool or the component thereof by releasing the chemical solution from storage external to the tool.

111. (New) The disposable downhole tool or the component thereof of claim 107 wherein the chemical solution is applied to the disposable downhole tool or the component thereof by dispensing the chemical solution into the well bore.

112. (New) The method of claim 38 wherein the degradable polymer comprising one or more compounds selected from the group consisting of polysaccharides, chitin, chitosans, poly(ethylene oxides), poly(phenyllactide), and polyphosphazenes.

113. (New) The system of claim 71 wherein the degradable polymer comprising one or more compounds selected from the group consisting of polysaccharides, chitin, chitosans, poly(ethylene oxides), poly(phenyllactide), and polyphosphazenes.

114. (New) The method of claim 86 wherein the disposable downhole tool or the component thereof comprises a degradable polymer comprising one or more compounds selected from the group consisting of polysaccharides, chitin, chitosans, poly(ethylene oxides), poly(phenyllactide), and polyphosphazenes.